## The Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee on Missouri's Transportation Needs Committee Meeting Minutes – May 14, 2012

The May 14 meeting of the Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee on Missouri's Transportation Needs was held at the Traffic Management Center in Chesterfield.

The meeting was called to order by co-chairs Bill McKenna and Rod Jetton.

Committee members in attendance were:

Blake Hurst
Estil Fretwell
John Nations
Brian Meisel
Mark Stidham
Duane Michie
Scott Smith
Joe DeLong
Tom Dunne
Len Toenjes
Becky Cleveland
Tom Crawford
Randy Verkamp

There were 121 persons from the general public in attendance. Special guests included Commissioners Grace Nichols and Ken Suelthaus from the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission.

Opening comments were made by co-chairs McKenna and Jetton on the importance of the creation of the Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee. Mr. Jetton stated the objective of the committee is to improve safety and promote economic development and to identify possible ways to pay for future transportation improvements.

MoDOT's St. Louis District Engineer, Ed Hassinger, provided the committee members with a broad overview of the many transportation needs that have been identified in the St. Louis region. Mr. Hassinger testified that the region needs between \$90 million and \$110 million annually in additional revenues to address many bridge improvements and between \$120 million and \$150 million annually in additional revenues for needed pavement improvements. Major corridors such as I-270 and I-70 are also in need of additional funding to address interchange, safety and operational improvements. He stated that the district cannot keep up with the need to move St. Louis forward economically.

Jessica Mefford-Miller, METRO, testified that for every one dollar invested in transportation there is a four dollar return. Ms. Mefford-Miller said that METRO has adopted a plan called "Moving Transit Forward" which provides ways for expanding and enhancing metro services throughout the metropolitan St. Louis area. She stated that Missouri is one of very few states that do not help fund public transportation.

Ed Hillhouse, East-West Gateway, provided the committee with a general overview of the makeup of the metropolitan planning organization (MPO). Mr. Hillhouse testified there are 252 bridges in the MPO that need to be repaired or replaced at a cost of \$195 million and \$700 million is needed for pavement needs on its some 21,495 miles of roads. Safety, clean air and economic development are the priorities for the region. Mr. Hillhouse stated that East-West

Gateway needs about \$1 billion over the next 10 years; an investment that will create and promote jobs for the area and the state as well.

Mike DeCola, representing Civic Progress, St. Louis Regional Business Council and the St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association, testified that the business community in the St. Louis area identified the need to create a statewide transportation vision which lead to the creation of the Missouri Transportation Alliance. Job growth and safety for the traveling public are the two focal points for the business community.

Mr. DeCola said it appears the state has gotten over regional divides and that we must look forward towards a statewide funding source. However, the state must have the willingness to invest in a transportation system that will attract and retain jobs. The funding source must be sustainable to take care of the needs for passenger vehicles, commercial trucks, truck and rail freight, passenger rail - all modes of transportation. MoDOT can be trusted with additional revenues to get projects done on time and one budget. He stated the business community feels that the time to act is now.

Peggy Brazil, Crissy Holmes and Amy Russo from St. Charles County, representing Shoulder for Safety, testified on the importance of needing shoulders along highways in various areas in the St. Louis such as Rt. F and Rt. N. According to the witnesses shoulders can help provide safety by reducing accidents and decrease fatalities along roadways in areas that have increased in population.

Otis Williams, St. Louis Development Corporation, testified on the importance the Mississippi River has on the St. Louis region. Mr. Otis said the corporation is working hard to make this region a global shipping access point however more funding is needed to improve the local rail line and shipping yard. An estimated \$5 million of infrastructure improvements are needed to make necessary port improvements. Mr. Otis also stated that money is needed to make improvements to the Merchants and MacArthur rail road bridges for the shipping of rail cargo. He emphasized that the time to act is now to move Missouri forward economically.

Sheryl Hodges, representing the St. Louis County executive, testified that for fifteen years, the county has been underfunded and only a few transportation needs can be addressed from a large needs list. She also stated that the county and MoDOT have an excellent working relationship.

Ms. Hodges testified that while partnerships between the county, MoDOT and local forms of government work well to achieve certain and specific transportation improvements, a long term funding source is vitally needed.

Steve Folesh, Paraquad, encouraged the committee members to consider the need for public accessibility when building and improving transportation projects. Accessibility to various forms of public transportation is vitally important for disabled persons.

Jefferson County Sheriff Glen Boyer and High Ridge Fire Chief Michael Arnhart, both testified on the importance to adequately fund improvements to rural route roads. These road improvements can significantly reduce traffic accidents and deaths. The Fire Chief made special

reference to improvements that are needed along Rt. 30 in Jefferson County. He noted improvements from Amendment 3 but that there is so much more to do.

Gary Elmestad, on behalf of the St. Charles County executive, testified that the county supports improvements to the I-70 corridor. Mr. Elmestad said the county appreciates MoDOT's ability to partner to finance improvements along Rt. 364 (Page Avenue) and Rt. M/370. However, improvements are needed in terms of striping and improved shoulder work along the lettered route roads within the county. The county continues to grow and the needs do as well.

Steve Gregalia, city of St. Louis, concurred with the testimony as presented by Mike DeCola. Mr. Gregalia stated that a good infrastructure system contributes to the success of a growing and vital economy for both the state and the St. Louis area.

Janice Luchan, Jefferson County Port Authority, testified on the need to invest in ports. Ms. Luchan said in the Pevely, Herculaneum and Crystal City areas unemployment is at 9½ percent compared to the state unemployment rate of 7½ percent. There is an effort underway to revitalize the communities by investing money into the port system which will put people back to work. Between \$100 million and one billion dollars is needed to make the necessary infrastructure improvements in the area. Private dollars are available if the public would help with infrastructure. The perceived mix is 20 percent of public funds generate 80 percent private funds and thousands of jobs.

Kim Cella, Citizens for Modern Transit, testified that for every one dollar invested in transportation there is a four dollar return. Ms. Cella said that transit puts money back in the pockets of Missouri. As outlined in MoDOT's Long Range Transportation Plan there is an estimate of \$200 million of transit needs throughout Missouri. In 2000, the Missouri General Assembly appropriated \$8.4 million for 33 transit providers in the state. In 2011, only \$560,000 was appropriated for transit. Transit helps people get to work.

Susan Trautman, Great Rivers Greenway, said her association wants to make the downtown St. Louis area look more attractive in order to attract and retain the younger generation. Ms. Trautman looks to the state as being a good working partner and thanked MoDOT for being a good partner to date.

John Bales, Lambert and Spirit Airport, testified on the importance aviation has on Missouri's economy. When businesses look to expand or locate to Missouri they look for a good business climate that includes government services and air cargo/passenger capabilities. Mr. Bales said the public use aviation industry provides \$5.8 billion in economic impact to the St. Louis region. There are 111 general use aviation airports in Missouri with \$38 million in needs and only \$5 million a year to address those concerns.

John Griesheimer, Franklin County Commissioner, testified that Franklin County is the fourth largest county in the state and that the Meramec Bridge improvement/replacement is the county's number one priority. This project has a cost of between \$6 million and \$13 million.

Mr. Griesheimer stated that all the groups in the meeting room must have a united front in order to pass a funding proposal for transportation. He believes an initiative petition will be the only way to pass a funding package. The package must be broad enough to give voters an opportunity to support a revenue package. This package could include several sources of revenue such as a sales tax and registration fee increase.

Ken Waller, Jefferson County, testified that while transportation improvements have been made, many more needs are evident. For instance, continued work along the I-55 corridor is a priority for the region. Highways 30 and 21, Rt. MM/W, and curves and shoulders on rural routes are all important needs to Jefferson County. Safety and jobs are so important. If people are told what projects they would get from a specific funding source, folks may support a revenue package for transportation.

Jim Terry, Rt. MM/W Committee, stated highway improvements have been made along Rt. MM/W, but more money is needed for safety purposes.

Shawn Archambault, One Curve at a Time, testified on the need to improve rural routes; specifically, roads that have narrow culverts, poor drainage, and steep slopes. Mr. Archambault's daughter was killed along Rt. FF in 2010. Mr. Archambault cites the previous reasons for the death of his daughter and hopes improvements to lettered routes could help prevent future fatalities.

Rebecca Zoll, North County, Inc. (NCI), represents 350,000 residents, businesses, colleges, and healthcare providers. While NCI works well with MoDOT to address their transportation needs, there are other issues that remain to be addressed such as improvements along I-270. The improvements being sought include replacing deficit bridges, replacing old culverts and relieving congestion.

Ann Mack, Trailnet, spoke on the need to ensure that any new future transportation funding includes walking trails and bicycle paths. Connectivity is important in providing trails and paths which can help get people from home to work on a daily basis. She also felt that younger people are looking for this connectivity.

Mary Chubb, Metropolitan Congregations United (MCU), testified that the state must invest more money in public transit. Ms. Chubb said there is a need for accessibility for the disabled. The expansion of transit systems help relieve burdens of heavily traveled roads and bridges.

Rick Francis, 21 Task Force, testified that improvements are needed to Rt. 21. There are real safety needs between Rt. B to Rt. H near DeSoto. Mr. Francis stated the intersection at Hwy. 110 and Rt. 21 is an offset, not a true intersection, which is very unsafe for the motorist in the area.

Kevin Corwin, City of St. Charles, provided the committee with an overview of the city's SCAT bus transportation hub.

Bill Straatman, Washington Area Transportation Committee and Bob Zick, Rt. 47 Missouri River Committee, both testified on the need to replace the existing Washington Bridge. Both presenters touched on the need to have leaders recommend a funding solution – not – identify a list of projects needs that could be done with increased funding. They felt that MoDOT and their extensive local planning partners have that expertise. Mr. Straatman said the last time the voters raised the transportation tax was in 1987. Mr. Straatman said it is time to let the voters decide again. They emphasized that increasing the fuel tax is not a good source of revenue for the future.

Ginger Harris, Sierra Club, testified there are three components for passing a revenue package for transportation – incentives, disincentives, and circles.

- Incentives are things like making commercial trucks pay their fair share for damages they do to roads and bridges.
- Disincentives are issues like the lack of safety concerns and connectivity for bicycle paths and walking trails.
- Circles are issues like the more the state caters to the needs of cars and trucks the harder it is to fund other modes of transportation such as bike and walking trails.

Brent Hugh, Missouri Bicycle and Pedestrian Federation, stated his organization supports a comprehensive and stable funding package for transportation. Instead of crying out there is a crisis for transportation every ten years, Mr. Hugh instead believes a steady and constant revenue flow is more appropriate for future transportation projects, both from a planning viewpoint and for continuity.

Tom Hayes, AGC-Fred Weber, testified that we know what the needs are. Instead, we need to focus on more money to fix those needs. Mr. Hayes said the construction industry has decreased by 46 percent. In 2009, Fred Weber did 93 percent of its work in Missouri. Now, since the downturn in the economy, they do less than 32 percent of its work in Missouri, thus going to other states where transportation funding is more readily available.

Phil Gonzales, an individual, testified that he doesn't believe the state should be mixing cars with bikes. Let bikes find other routes to travel than on roads and highways. Mr. Gonzales went on to say one way to generate transportation revenues is to allow advertising on the sides of bridges. MoDOT does a great job; we just need to find a better way to fund transportation.

Larry Glynn, an individual, stated we need to look at ways to collect revenues from other alternative fueled vehicles such as automobiles that run on electricity, compressed natural gas, and propane. Mr. Glynn said we must also look into ways of taxing vehicle miles traveled and a weight-based system.

A representative from the Governor's Council on Disability and a representative from OATS, Eastern Region, will submit their testimony to the panel as they had to leave. In addition, Mr. Terrence Moore, with AEP River Operations, the largest transportation company for the inland waterway system left testimony for the panel as he had to leave as well.

With no further business the committee adjourned.

The next meeting for the Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee is scheduled for May 21, at the MoDOT Northwest District Office in St. Joseph, at 1:00 p.m.